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SUBJECT: VIETNAM: COUNTERTERRORISM ACTION GROUP MEETING
HIGHLIGHTS CAPACITY BUILDING EFFORTS

11. (SBU) Summary: Local G-8 Counter Terrorism Action Group (CTAG) Ambassadors were briefed by the Head of the Counterterrorism Department of the Ministry of Public Security, and later met privately with representatives from Australia, the European Commission and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The official message was that Vietnam is taking counterterrorism (CT) more seriously than before, and is concerned that its proximity to higher threat Southeast Asian countries (particularly Cambodia) makes it vulnerable to attack by foreign terrorists crossing its borders. Vietnam now has its own home-grown CT strategy. CTAG partners carry out a range of CT and related assistance programs. Vietnam would welcome further assistance, including assistance in preparing for the 2006 APEC Leaders' Meeting, but lacks a comprehensive assessment of its own assistance needs.

12. (SBU) Summary Continued: For the most part, this meeting reaffirmed our 2004 assessment: that Vietnam has a low risk of domestic indigenous terrorism, and that necessary CT steps will focus on identifying foreign terrorists and preventing possible attacks from outside Vietnam. The one new wrinkle for the coming year is the APEC Summit, which will require close coordination to ensure that proper event security is maintained. End Summary.

13. (SBU) CTAG members in Hanoi gathered October 12 to assess Vietnam's CT preparedness. In a departure from CTAG meetings in 2003 and 2004, the G-8 Ambassadors were invited to the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) for a detailed briefing by Senior Colonel Hoang Kong Tu, Director of the MPS Counterterrorism Department.

Meeting with MPS

14. (SBU) Senior Colonel Tu noted that terrorist activities are increasing at an alarming rate in Southeast Asia. Vietnam is aware that it remains vulnerable to international terrorism, not least due to its proximity to countries such as Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia, he said. The activities of certain overseas Vietnamese, in particular the "Government of Free Vietnam," are also cause for concern. Tu said he is confident that Vietnam's own indigenous Muslim population lives peacefully, although those who travel on pilgrimages to Mecca or engage in training courses provided by Islamic organizations might become susceptible to terrorist influences. MPS has drawn up its own CT strategy, which includes the following elements: awareness raising and surveillance; information and intelligence sharing; new CT infrastructure (including the establishment of the CT Department in MPS); border security; CT financing and anti-money laundering; explosive materials; and, regional and international cooperation. He emphasized that international assistance and cooperation, particularly from G-8 countries, have had a decisive impact on his country's efforts to build an effective strategy and response to terrorism. Vietnam would welcome more capacity building in this area, Tu stated.

15. (SBU) The G-8 participants largely agreed that Tu's assessment was open, frank and refreshingly free from the complacency that has characterized Vietnam's previous CT assessments. The UK Ambassador saw it as a "forward step" in Vietnam's readiness to engage internationally on CT. Ambassador Marine said he believes that there are now other options for engagement (however gradual) that were not present 18 months ago. The Japanese DCM noted that Senior Colonel Tu had been anxious to show that Vietnam was up to date on CT matters.

16. (SBU) Participants agreed that the subsequent question and answer session was disappointing. Senior Colonel Tu answered few, if any, of the G-8's specific questions. Ambassador Marine and the Australian Ambassador expressed particular concern regarding the 2006 APEC Summit. The Australian Ambassador further wondered if capitals will feel they have the necessary assurances to be able to attend the summit. The Ambassador noted that the United States hopes that its bilateral confidence building measures with Vietnam on CT will continue.

17. (SBU) France took a less positive view: the French Ambassador said that Senior Colonel Tu's speech had been carefully scripted, and the low-level MPS representation (a Senior Colonel rather than the Major General we had been promised) reflected the relative unimportance which the Vietnamese attach to the subject. The Russian Ambassador noted that in other countries the Ministry of Public Security does not usually interact with foreigners. Thus, the low level of representation might be because MPS is "testing the water" and, if the meeting went well, they could raise the level in future. A UK Poloff told Embassy Poloff that MPS Deputy Minister Nguyen Khanh Toan later spoke positively to the UK Ambassador about the CT discussion with the G-8, which suggests that future meetings might be held at a higher level.

18. (SBU) Participants agreed that Vietnam's own assessment of the threat of terrorism is realistic. While there is little domestic threat of terrorism in Vietnam, Vietnam is at risk due to its proximity to terrorist organizations in other countries (particularly Cambodia), who could exploit vulnerabilities to carry out attacks on its territory. The Canadian Ambassador believes the main message that came through from Senior Colonel Tu's assessment was that Cambodia is the "weak link" in Vietnam's CT defences.

CTAG Donor CT-related Training and Assistance Programs

19. (SBU) Participants in the CTAG meeting provided updates on their CT-related assistance to Vietnam as follows:

Canada

The Canadian Ambassador reported that the Canadian Treasury recently approved a USD 15 million annual CT Capacity Building program (CTCB), over the next few years. Once fully operational, the CTCB Program will provide technical assistance and training to developing states, including those in Southeast Asia. Canada hopes through the program to be more actively engaged in areas where it is seen to have particular value to add. Such areas of assistance include first responder training; chemical incident recovery; fraudulent document detection; aviation safety and security; bomb disposal and intelligence-led policing.

Vietnam-relevant activities:

Completed:

- Bioterrorism expertise supplied to the Japanese Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) seminar held at the Southeast Asia Regional Center for Counterterrorism (SEARCCT) in July 2005.

Planned (all projects/funding to be confirmed as subject to approval):

- APEC International Shipping and Port Facility Security Code training (funding for APEC workshop);
- CBRN International First Responder (and Policy Making) Training Program in Southeast Asia (minor equipment component: coveralls and basic detectors). First phase early 2006;
- Placement of an RCMP officer at the Jakarta Center for Law Enforcement Co-operation to deliver regional anti-terrorism financing training;
- Funding to the Asian Development Bank Co-operation Fund for Regional Trade and Financial Security Initiative;
- Funding to International Maritime Organization for technical assistance projects in Asia and the Americas; and,
- Funding to International Civil Aviation Organization for technical assistance and training related to the Universal Security Audit Program.

France

The French Ambassador reported that France provides technical CT assistance to Vietnam primarily in the form of training. Since 2003, France has conducted training courses on counterterrorism and border control. It has also established a special "intervention training unit," which has been active over the past three years, focused on handling crisis situations.

He noted that France hopes to convene a regional ASEAN seminar on counterterrorism in 2004, but that the seminar has not taken place due to reluctance on the part of the Vietnamese authorities. Vietnam's reluctance might in part stem from a fear that participating in such a visible workshop (with Cambodia) could make Vietnam susceptible to becoming a terrorist target, he speculated.

In 2006, France expects to finalize the establishment of a special intervention unit that will specialize in crisis negotiation. The French Ambassador also noted that, in a

recent discussion with the Standing Deputy Minister of Public Security, the latter, in citing his ministry's priorities for 2006, had placed counterterrorism at the top of MPS's agenda.

Germany

The German Ambassador advised that, in the eyes of German law enforcement and intelligence analysts, Vietnam is not a priority threat country for terrorism. Germany is working mostly on counternarcotics and organized crime issues, and in that context financial crimes are often addressed. This is an area where there is potential overlap with the CT mission, since the Vietnamese banking system is weak and thus vulnerable to exploitation by terrorist groups as well as organized crime.

Germany has no concrete CT assistance programs for Vietnam, but is planning to sign a bilateral anti-organized crime agreement that will have a CT clause. In the last year, Vietnam participated in an ASEM-related CT seminar with other ASEAN countries in Berlin. Germany and Vietnam also co-operated on information sharing on law enforcement issues.

Italy

The Italian Ambassador noted that Italy does not have a separate bilateral CT assistance program with Vietnam. Nevertheless, Italy continues to train MPS officers on a yearly basis on anti-drug trafficking issues. Italy is co-financing multilateral programs in related fields such as a UNODC anti-drug project, including training activities and a media campaign, for a total commitment of USD 300,000, and a UNICEF regional program aimed at fighting and preventing human trafficking (total value 5 million euros, of which USD 800,000 is for Vietnam).

Japan

The Japanese DCM reported that in July 2005, Japan and SEARCCT held a training course on "Prevention and Crisis Management of Biological Terrorism," inviting officials in charge of counter-biological terrorism from ASEAN countries, China and the Republic of Korea. Experts from Japan, the United States, France and WHO also participated.

In January 2006, Japan plans to hold a seminar in Tokyo on the "Promotion of Accession to the 12 UN Counterterrorism Conventions and Protocols." It has requested participating countries from ASEAN and APEC to submit a report prior to the seminar containing concrete action plans and time schedules for taking the necessary domestic measures to conclude and implement these international standards.

Russia

The Russian Ambassador reported that Russia provides several annual training courses for groups of MPS officers. The Federal Service of the Russian Federation for Narcotics Traffic Control and Vietnam's MPS are expected in the near future to conclude a bilateral agreement on cooperation in fighting illegal traffic of narcotics, psychotropic substances and precursors.

United States

The Ambassador reported that the United States provides CT assistance to Vietnam primarily by funding Vietnamese participation in CT-related training at the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Bangkok, and through military-to-military exchanges with an emphasis on CT themes. The USG funds Vietnamese military (and civilian) participation in training courses and conferences on a case-by-case basis.

In 2005, U.S. Military CT-related events at which Senior Colonel-level or above Vietnamese military or civilian representatives attended included:

- January 2005 Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS) Executive Course
- March 2005 APCSS Senior Executive Course
- April 2005 Symposium on East Asia Security (SEAS)
- August-September 2005 APCSS Comprehensive Security Responses to Terrorism Course
- December 2005 APCSS Senior Executive Course on Transnational Threats

The United States expects 2006 events, and Vietnamese participation, to follow the 2005 pattern. The specific

course titles (and attendees) will differ slightly.

On the civilian side, USG counterterrorism-related assistance is mostly in the form of training Ministry of Public Security (MPS) and other civilian officials through ILEA in Bangkok. The Ambassador said the United States looks forward to expanding in-country training, based on positive feedback from in-country sessions to date. He observed that the geographic diversity of participants in training courses to date is an improvement over earlier courses where all the participants were from the major cities.

In 2005, the ILEA schedule included eight course sessions with direct CT relevance:

- Combating Transnational Terrorism (two sessions, January and August-September)
- Post Blast Investigations (two sessions, June and October)
- Complex Financial Investigations
- Crime Scene Investigations
- Police Executive Role in Combating Terrorism
- Personnel and Facility Security

The United States paid for between two and five Government officials (usually MPS or police officers from around the country) to attend these courses, which lasted from one to six weeks each.

In addition to these courses, the United States also funds a larger-scale counter-narcotics project through the UN Office of Drugs and Crime to create "Joint Interdiction Task Force Units" in six border provinces. These inter-agency units are mainly concerned with counter-narcotics activities, but the effect they have on border security makes them relevant to the counter-terrorism effort as well. This project finishes in 2006.

The Ambassador reported that in 2006 the United States hopes to be able to provide event security and VIP protection-related assistance to help with counter-terrorism efforts specific to the 2006 APEC Summit.

The United States is also exploring the possibility of a maritime security assistance program to be carried out in 2006 by the U.S. Pacific Command in the context of U.S. counter-narcotics assistance to Vietnam. The implementing agency would be the Joint Interagency Task Force - West (JIATF West).

Australia -----

The Australian Ambassador reported that Australia's own experience as the victim of terrorism in the region means that it places top priority on developing cooperative CT arrangements in Southeast Asia, with a special focus on Indonesia and the Philippines. The threat level in Vietnam is low by comparison, but terrorists are adept at exploiting opportunities in unexpected places, and Vietnam's border with Cambodia in particular could allow relatively easy entry for terrorists. Vietnam's hosting of APEC in 2006 will focus global attention on Vietnam, which might raise its profile for regional terrorist networks looking for high-profile targets over the coming year.

Australia's CT efforts with connection to Vietnam are as follows:

- Follow-up to the February 2004 Bali Regional Ministerial Meeting on Counterterrorism;
- Facilitating Vietnamese attendance at tailored courses at the Jakarta Center for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC);
- Engagement via MFA and Ministry of Justice participation in the Legal Issues Working Group (LIWG) activity focused on improving CT legislation and compliance with UN instruments;
- Engagement via Counterterrorism Department of the MPS participation in the Law Enforcement Working Group (LEWG) stream, focused on improving regional CT-related law enforcement cooperation and information sharing.
- Closer engagement with the Counterterrorism Department of the MPS as Vietnam's national CT coordinating body;
- Observing Australia's national CT Exercise MERCURY' 05 this October;
- Engagement in the context of Vietnam's CT-related security preparations for hosting APEC 2006, including offering capacity-building assistance;
- Border integrity and entry-exit controls activity, including:
 - English-language courses and capacity building (such as fraud detection training) for MPS Immigration/Vietnam Airlines/MND Border Guards staff;
 - Provision of document fraud laboratories for Hanoi and HCMC airports; and,
 - Assistance with APEC Advanced Passenger Information feasibility study, and other border assessment program discussions;
- Ongoing discussion of assistance for dedicated CT units of

the Ministry of National Defense; and,
- Intelligence exchange.

European Commission -----

The EC reported that there is currently no EC assistance to Vietnam in CT-related areas at bilateral level.

At the regional level, an EC-ASEAN border management program is under preparation. A feasibility study for this program has been launched in consultation with the ASEAN Secretariat; its results will be available in early 2006.

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The ASEAN Secretariat has proposed three regional centers: the Jakarta Law Enforcement Center (JCLEC), the Southeast Asia Regional Center for Counter-Terrorism in Malaysia (SEACCT) and the International Law Enforcement Academy in Bangkok (ILEA) as potential beneficiaries. The EC is already supporting JCLEC under its bilateral co-operation with Indonesia.

The EC representative noted that CT cooperation is also discussed in the ASEM context. The Third ASEM Conference on Counterterrorism will take place on November 14-15, 2005 in Indonesia. It will provide another opportunity for further developing counterterrorism cooperation between Europe and Asia.

UNODC -----

The UNODC Resident Representative reported on UNODC's continuing support to Vietnam on ratification and implementation of all 12 international instruments against terrorism, as well as the provision of technical assistance to address other legal gaps.

UNODC-Vienna, through its Terrorism Prevention Branch, is currently conducting a comparative study on "Anti-Terrorism Legislative Developments in Seven Asian and Pacific Countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam and Timor-Leste)," an examination of the current status of anti-terrorist legal provisions, focusing on existing gaps in laws and national practices of ratification and implementation of the 12 CT conventions and protocols. The study will support the implementation of the decisions made at the Bali Ministerial Meeting, and will be used as a background document for the second regional anti-terrorism workshop planned in Tokyo in early 2006.

UNODC and The World Bank co-finance an anti-money laundering advisor for Indochina (based at the UNODC Office in Hanoi, covering Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam), and UNODC hopes to provide varying other money laundering assistance to Vietnam, including:

- Providing AML/CFT advice;
- Training and technical assistance to support the establishment, development and implementation of AML/CFT systems, including the development of a national strategy for effective implementation of Decree No.74/2005;
- Establishing of a financial intelligence unit ("Anti-Money Laundering Information Center"); and,
- Improving capacities of the agencies concerned e.g. police and prosecution.

United Kingdom -----

The British Ambassador reported that in 2005, the United Kingdom carried out the following CT-related assistance programs:

- January 2005: One week Regional Crisis Management Course at the Southeast Asia Center on Counterterrorism in Kuala Lumpur to upgrade Vietnam's CT capacity in a regional setting. Four senior level operational commanders from the MPS CT Unit attended.
- April 2005: Two week Police Crisis management Course on CT in the UK. Three senior-level commanders from MPS CT Unit attended.
- June 2005: Visit to UK by Deputy Director of the General Department of Police Major General Tran Van Thao and five officers in conjunction with UNODC. The main theme was police cooperation, but the visit also touched on CT work.
- October 2005: Three officers from MPS CT Unit attended a "border management in the context of CT" course in Singapore.
- Ongoing: English language training courses for MPS officers. Over 75 officers trained so far.

Overlapping Assistance and Necessary Program Changes -----

10. (SBU) Participants agreed that where programs might overlap (such as English training), the concerned parties

should coordinate closely to ensure that assistance is not duplicated. Overall, however, duplication of efforts is not considered a problem. There remains more need than donor capacity, though a clearer idea of Vietnam's CT requirements would help target assistance more effectively, and create new opportunities for donors to cooperate with Vietnam.

Assessment of Vietnam's CT Needs

11. (SBU) The group agreed that strengthening Vietnam's legal framework, law enforcement and border management remain key targets for continued and enhanced CT assistance. Other areas include: enhanced inter-ministry/agency coordination; terrorist financing legislation and implementation; and event security.

Participants shared the view that an effective assistance strategy requires a formal assessment of Vietnam's needs. Such an assessment has not yet been undertaken.

Agreement on Future Action

12. (SBU) Local CTAG members agreed that the UK Presidency, in thanking the MPS for their presentation, should invite MPS to consider drawing up a matrix of CT assistance needs and a strategy for how to address them. This letter should also underline the importance of starting to prepare for APEC 2006 promptly and the willingness of certain G-8 members to provide assistance in this area.

13. (SBU) Comment: Despite the fact that Vietnam is unanimously considered at low risk of terrorist attack compared to its neighbors, all of our CTAG interlocutors are closely engaged on the issue. We were not as concerned with the level of MPS representation as France was, and agree with the UK view that the MPS decision to send anyone to brief the CTAG ambassadors was a good step forward. Combined with regular contact between our security officers and political officers, these high-level meetings serve to maintain a consultation network on CT issues. For the most part, this meeting reaffirmed our 2004 assessment: that Vietnam has a low risk of domestic indigenous terrorism, and that necessary CT steps will focus on identifying foreign terrorists and preventing possible attacks from outside Vietnam. Current USG assistance efforts in the counternarcotics field, such as the Joint Task Force Units operating in six border provinces, created with USG funding and UNODC training, will increase Vietnamese security forces' capacity in counterterrorism as well. The one new wrinkle for the coming year is the APEC Summit, which will require close coordination to ensure that proper event security is maintained. End Comment.

MARINE